

**Education Governance Responses**  
**Vergennes Meeting (4/13/07) - Vergennes Union High School**

24 Attendees (facilitated by Robin Scheu)

**Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:**

**Advantages**

Towns well represented  
Concerns spoken to immediately  
Ensures local, small school remains  
Local control  
Board members know their schools  
More member more breadth/depth  
Constituent representation  
Familiar and comfortable  
Involves parents and public  
Community centers  
Better communications?  
Local control  
More diverse board  
Greater representation  
Many voices  
More time for specific issues  
Sense of community in each town school with “control”

**Disadvantages**

No direct input from people to superintendent  
Complex-people don't participate  
Duplication of service and cost  
Contractual issues  
Administrative scarcity  
School board vacancies  
Less opportunities for economies of scale  
Blurred board roles  
Number of boards  
Board member turnover  
Focus of boards: too many meetings  
Inefficient – duplication  
Expensive  
Confusing structure  
Multiple school boards  
Have to report to boards  
Difficult to address cross-town transportation  
Replacement of principal and superintendent and board members  
Inefficiencies in distributing and discussing information for boards eg. Policies, curriculum  
Each board makes own decisions  
Busing: overlapping lines – students riding a long way

- Inequities in program
- Inefficiencies in budgets and process
- Inequities with budgets
- Superintendent turnover due to inefficient use of time
- Not using superintendent to the best of his/her abilities

**Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?**

**Advantages**

- Superintendent's job more manageable
- Resource sharing
- School equity
- Potential school choice by subject
- Board control of superintendent and budget
- Simplifies structure
- More efficient – combine schools
- Central budget – one to deal with
- Central contract
- Sharing of: resources, buildings, staff, busing, debt
- Central curriculum
- Economies of scale
- Scoring statewide assessments – larger numbers?
- Fewer board positions to fill
- More efficient use of superintendent's time
- Common discussion at board level of all schools
- Might allow schools to remain open by reconfiguring – because of declining enrollment
- Principals would not have to attend meetings
- Cost savings to the school district vs. the supervisory union
- Less positions to be filled for school boards and superintendents
- “Big Picture thinking” coordination of/or combination of purchasing powers
- District contracts

**Disadvantages**

- Would this work for elementary school model?
- Teacher job security
- What happens to small schools?
- Lose people to people contact
- Less local participation (elected)
- Small schools lose control?
- What is incentive?
- Can't determine savings - \$\$ Are there any?
- Amount of time spent at board meetings
- Fair representation by town schools
- Losing local control
- Fear of school closures
- Saving cost and time with a loss in discussion of local issues
- Narrowing of power; loss in the variety of voices and diversity

**Debrief Comments:**

Should there be a business manager (equivalent of town manager)?  
Board spends an enormous amount of time on facilities and budget ...how can we off load some of this and focus on education?  
Consolidated contracts for teachers?  
Fee based services?  
Create pilot programs with incentives from the state  
Address governance issue other than cost savings  
Promote that local control and equity extends K-12 – currently primarily focused on elementary  
Statewide calendar and contracts  
Superintendent attendance? At every board meeting? Reassigning what is required  
Consolidation of schools, fluid staff, creation of job insurance more where the need is  
Making the mistake that one solution is good for many because it is good for few  
Coordination of curriculum resources experience/tech and sharing of curriculum resources.  
Promotion through governance.  
What role does the DOE play with governance?  
Can superintendent with the DOE taking on some responsibilities?  
Home schools and governance –position within/on the board  
Some incentives to do it \$\$  
Fewer supervisory unions – than 58 i.e.2/county  
What will governance do to control health care costs? Increase class size. Control special ed costs?  
School Councils replace school boards if consolidation does take place  
Surprised that principals would not necessarily attend board meetings; principals have much to offer  
Late hours of board meetings. Don't always make best use of time for priorities  
?re: Effectiveness of large boards/better trng or dif. opportunities for com. involvement  
Community councils with students can help retain perception of community control  
Concern – fewer voices = narrowing of control  
Reorganization may help more small schools to survive  
Concern re: communities retaining ownership of facilities (vs.district owned) not a visible concern in state  
Legislature can make it happen or grassroots demand it (less likely)  
Top-down mandate may put kids at risk